

ISSN INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
ISSN-2321-7065

IJELLH

International Journal of English Language, Literature in Humanities

Indexed, Peer Reviewed (Refereed), UGC Approved Journal



Volume 7, Issue 2, February 2019

www.ijellh.com

Karishma Bisht

Research Scholar, Department of English

Gurukul Kangri Viswavidyalaya ,

Haridwar, Uttaranchal, India

sunitabishtkari@gmail.com

Dhvani Unfolds Imbalance In Lacan's Borromean Knots in

A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams

Abstract : In Lacan's clinical study, the Borromean Knot represents the balance in the psychological frame of mind. These are represented by the three interlinked rings that have been established in the formative years of the development of mind. Before one builds a communicative link with the outside world by employing language.

However in some cases the influence of the external factors affects the balance thereby disrupting the Borromean Knots. This disruption being complex and unsystematic was not well justified by Lacan. This shortcoming can be justified through the incorporation of Indian Aesthetics Approach of Dhvani. That helps to analyze language at a deeper level and also identify the detailed disruption while justifying it. This concept can be analyzed on the literary perspective through the character analysis of Blanche, from *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams.

Keywords: Lacan, Dhavani, Mirror Stage, Symbollic Stage, Real Stage, Borromean Knot

The Psychoanalytical approach in literature has enabled to understand the most complex of the characters by identifying the root cause for that particularity. These characters have been termed by the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan as *Hommelette*. That is

described as a complex behavioral combination of infant and young boy in relation to Hamlet from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

So Hamlet is an omelette because he has no selfhood of his own; he is haunted to the core by the undiscovered secrets of the father. Even his name implies the interpsychic nature of his guilt, since it confuses the distinction between Hamlet son and Hamlet phantom. (17 Ellmann)

Based on his study Lacan concluded that the behavioral problems in an individual are caused due to the failure to express one's desires. The desires under normal conditions are formed at a gradual scale throughout the biological development. That initiates at the onset of the child phase. In the process the objective lies in identification of external components that help in a balanced psychological development. Thereby enabling the expression of internal biological desires in accordance with the familiar external components.

These external components initiate through the representation of self as reflection and have been called the Mirror phase. The subsequent, Symbolic phase promotes the ability to identify the difference between the items surrounding self with the framed representations. The final, Real phase follows the disruption of the foundational ideologies of the mirror and symbolic phase. Lacan interlinks the three phases through a common string with the concept of the Borromean Knot. The common string represents the interdependence of the phases on each other. However the disturbances in any phase will disrupt the balance of the mind leading to the mental imbalance in the form of psychosis.

Lacan invoked the structure of certain knots to deepen this investigation, once again turning to mathematics for the formalizations he was seeking. Although this theorizing seemed and still seems to many to be abstruse and devoid of clinical relevance. Lacan was addressing real problems in practice, particularly with

psychotic structures and what Anglo- Saxton clinicians might call the borderline.

(Leader, 165)

Thus representational understanding of the Borromean Knot can be analyzed further by the Indian Aesthetic approach of Dhvani. That unfolds the psychological functionality. By analyzing the language structure of the individual expression. These expressions are based on the individual perception of his surrounding. That is represented in language as Associative expression, Dissociative expressions and Ambiguous expressions. This process holds practical approach for decoding Lacan's principle by focusing on the close evaluation of language. That helps in finding a deeper meaning of the structural word. Thereby interpreting the hidden meaning concealed by the individual.

In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Blanche's language is very calculated while communicating with people around her. She is revealing and concealing her beliefs and thoughts to suit her requirements. Her precautionous approach can be studied in relations to her fixation with the past experiences. Therefore the language she uses undergoes a gradual progression till she breaks away from the three interlinked phases of Borromean Knot.

The initiating, Mirror phase is represented with language of associative expressions. In this the language structure has a direct approach (Vivakasitavacya dhvani) through object associations (Vastu Dhvani). The objects that induce strong affinity are expressed in a language with ornate expression. She associates objects of close associations with the word "Lamb". On the surface level the word is an expression of admiration and flattery for the object. On the suggestive realm, the word thematically represents her unconscious desire to control and tame the innocent gullible individual.

Structurally her unconscious exploit is evident with the use of a prefix in the form of transferred epithet (Alamakara Dhvani). She employs this technique during the initial phase of interaction with the individuals around her. This language technique is employed in her

address to her sister whom she calls “Precious Lamb” and a young man that is addressed as “Honey Lamb”. In the former case the word “Precious” on the surface level represents significant or importance with respect to association. However on the suggestive level it represents her desperate conscious call for help. This is because Stella is the only source of alternative from her past associations for rehabilitating herself.

The term Honey on the surface level for the latter case is a glorification for the youth that Blanche’s unconscious expresses attraction for despite the social constricts. On the suggestive level the honey is the youth from her past who could not fulfill her expectations. Based on the restrictions her conscious faced in the past it is an unconscious expression in the present scenario.

The gradual variation in the language of dissociation is evident by her use of derogatory expression on the surface level. At the suggestive level the objects or individuals involved have had a damaging influence on her conscious in the past. This is visible when she compares the objects/ individual metaphorically to suggest her opinion (Alamakara Dhvani). These associations in the initial half are in relation to the place, New Orleans which reminds her of the fictional gothic world of Edgar Allan Poe. The place suggests the traumatic hardships the ego had to undergo in the past. Thereafter she gradually targets Stanley, symbolic of individuals that had targeted her true stable self in the past.

BLANCHE: These are love-letters, yellowing with antiquity, all from
one boy. [He snatches them up. She speaks fiercely.] Give
those back to me!

STANLEY: I’ll have a look at them first!

BLANCHE: The touch of your hands insults them!

STANLEY: Don’t pull that stuff!

BLANCHE: Now that you’ve touched them I’ll burn them!

(23 *Streetcar*)

The language at the next level shifts to form hypocritical symbolic representations. These opinions suggestively form new identification (signifier) that diverts the attention from her present image (Vastu dhvani). These direct thoughts are contradictory to their surface meaning. This is visible in her preference for primary colors over blended colors “pink and creams”. She also alludes to her personality being pure and untainted by being descriptive about her astrological sun sign, Virgo. Even in context to others she imposes her own opinion in the form of rhetorical questions (Alamakara Dhvani).

That was all Stella! And I with my pitiful salary at school. Yes, accuse me!

Sit there and stare at me, thinking I let the place go! I let the place go?

Where were you. In the bed with your – Polak (12 *Streetcar*)

In the final realm of consciousness her language grows dominant in the last stages in the play. The language structurally is completely out of context (Avivaksitavacya Dhvni) in relation to situation it is employed in. At the initial level the language has partial transformation suggestive of the hidden connotation. Although the representations are ambiguous and vague as the true source cannot be identified. She even employs the allusive phonetic effect to enforce her opinion at the end of all queries. Thereby creating no impact. Therefore these expressions develop at the course of free association as she explains her experiences in the unrestrained order.

STANLEY: What happened?

BLANCHE: The boy – the boy died. [She sinks back down.] I’m afraid

I’m going to be sick! (15 *Streetcar*)

On the surface level while giving an account of her past associations she suddenly looms into an emotional state. Hence structurally the final expression is indicative of her losing grip of reality. Though the cause for doing so is ambiguous in the expressions. The

intensity gradually increases as her language dissociates slowly with no contextual reference to the situations around her.

The structure is followed with rhythmic charms at some points in her expression. She uses these structures in locales that have a tranquillizing effect on her as the listener is absent. She relates to the rhythm in order to cope with the tension and strain of the outside world. For instance in the bathroom she consciously employs confessional songs that are enabling the unconscious to experience pleasure. “Say, It’s only a paper moon, Sailing over a cardboard sea – But it wouldn’t be a make- believe If you believed in me!” (70 *Streetcar*). On the suggestive level the compound word structure unfolds the subconscious images that are the actual beliefs of the conscious mind.

The complex word “Paper moon” is a combination of the fragile intrinsic quality of the paper and the moon represents the distinction of individuality. Together the words account for the fragile resilience of her Ego to express itself honestly on the interactive level. On the other hand the words cardboard sea, the cardboard represents the hard intrinsic quality in the form of official judgement that juxtaposes to the smooth flexible course of movement of the sea. The contrast represents the external constraints her conscious has experienced at the harsh judgement of people.

Therefore by chanting the concealed truth her inner nerves experience exhilaration at the unconscious level, as the ego reveals the truth through hidden connotation. At the higher levels her language attains a foreign rhythmic format (spanish).

El pan de mais, el pan de mais,

El pan de mais sin sal,

El pan de mais, el pan de mais,

El pan de mais sin sal. . . (82 *Streetcar*)

On the surface level the word chants are absurd as they make no sense. Her sister is in labor and the situation requires an expression of urgency and concern. Instead she chants vague lines that on translation identify as “The bread of maize, The bread of maize without salt, The bread of maize the bread of maize”. Even in a foreign language the chant is paradoxical. In her suggestive expression she is referring to the child’s arrival. The maize is the grain from which the bread is made, on the biological level it is the husband Stanley. The salt is scientifically an essential ingredient to the flavor and right foundation in the manufacturing of the bread. However in her conscious construct the salt is the refined social values that are not present in Stanley’s parenting. The limitation fails to provide the family cultural construct and an identity.

The harsh truth is able to exhilarate Blanche’s unconscious, as she is easily able to express the complex structure without any conscious constrain. The gradual experience of exhilaration by the unconscious mind is followed by a gradual lapse of her conscious mind. This is visible in her frantic outburst and fabrication of a fictional scenario to save her Ego. However her conscious expression by the end seems vulnerable, as a result by the end the conscious considers the surrounding element as abstract.

Hence she is left with her strong expression of the unconscious desire only. “whoever you are- I have always depended on the kindness of strangers”. (107 *Streetcar*) Therefore breaking of any one element in the Borromean Knot destroys the stable temperament in the individual. Hence in Blanche’s case the mirror and subsequently the symbolic phase dissociates leading to the breaking of the Borromean Knot that is responsible for the eventual breakdown

Work Cited

Ellmann, M. *Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism*. New York: Routledge, 2013. 18. Print.

Evans, Dylan. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. New York: Routledge, 2006. Print.

Griffin, Alice. *Understanding Tennessee Williams*. Columbia: South Carolina, 1995. 143. Print.

Lacan, Jacques. *ECRITS*. Trans. Bruce Fink. New York: Norton & Company, 2006. 1-800. Print.

Leader, Darian, Judy Groves. *Introducing Lacan A Graphic Guide*. London: Icon Books, 2010. 165. Print.

THE DHVANYALOKA OF ANANDAVARDHAN WITH THE LOCANA OF ABHINAVAGUPTA. Trans. Daniel H. H Ingalls, Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, M. V PATWARDHAN. London: Harvard University Press, 1990. Print.

Williams, Tennessee. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. New York: Penguin, 2009. Print.